

Remarks
Press Conference Releasing
1983 Surgeon General's Report on
"Health Consequences of Smoking: Cardiovascular Disease"
November 17, 1983

The problem of smoking and health is on the desk of every Surgeon General when he or she arrives in Washington. The law requires that once a year the Surgeon General prepare a report on the status of smoking and health in some particular facet of current knowledge, which is then presented to the Congress by the Secretary of Health and Human Services by way of the Assistant Secretary for Health. This is the second of eight such reports that I delivered during my two-term tenure as Surgeon General of the United States.

These press conferences were usually the largest held in Washington, and at times they developed into hostile exchange between members of the press representing tobacco industry publication, and the Surgeon General. It was not unusual for a reporter, representing tobacco, but nevertheless admitted to the press conference to tease some obscure fact out of the Surgeon General's Report and attempt to trip him on it by an open question from the floor.

My preparation for the answers to such questions was one of the most difficult tasks I faced once a year, and I eventually got it down to a science where I anticipated as many questions as possible, prepared brief pertinent answers to such questions, and then placed them in a three-ringed binder with tabs on three sides of the pages. My handling of the first such press conference was the turning point in my relationship with the press, before that a disastrous hostility, and after that a supportive adjunct to my mission.

This press conference covers a report of 374 pages bound in a book and to list the topics covered would be like the book's index. Instead, I am listing just the major subtitles of the book, which are covered briefly in the press conference, more deeply the questions and answers, but really found in their entirety in the report.

Arteriosclerosis
Artherosclerotic peripheral vascular disease & aortic aneurysm
Changes in cigarette smoking behavior in clinical & community trials
Cerebrovascular disease
Coronary heart disease
Pharmacacological & Toxicological implications of smoke constituents on cardio vascular disease
The effect of cigarette smoking cessation on coronary heart disease
Trends in cardio vascular disease
Trends in U.S. cigarette use 1965 - 1980